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A

LETTER

From a Friend in *Shropshire* to his Country-man

Mr. Richard Baxter

AT HIS

MEETING-HOUSE

IN

L O N D O N.

BEing well assur'd of the respect you bear to mankind in general, and particularly those of your Native-Country, I presume to trouble your Reverence with the perusing of these lines, being mostly matter of Fact, as it is acted by one Mr. *Hugh P*— and Mr. *Philip ap R*—, *Preachers* of an *Independent* Congregation at *Swiny* in this Parish, at Mrs. *Bakers*, in which you may easily observe how some men corrupt the word, and what kind of gain they make by the pretence of *Godliness*. Had I known the particular Resident at *London* for this part of *England*, I would have forborn this trouble to your self; but presuming you may have some knowledge of him, I desire, at your first conveniency, to communicate this with what you shall think fit further to be done in the Affair, as your Reverence's Wisdom shall find most expedient. The Case is, Mrs. *Baker* before-named was left by her Husband *Baker* (one whom you know to be an honest man, and active in the *late Reformation*) in possession of an acquir'd Estate, to the value of 500 *l. per annum* well stock'd, and generally believed to be a money'd man. The said *Preachers*, with one Mr. *M*— of *Shrewsbury*, a Person for his Integrity well known to all the Gentlemen in the County, were deputed Trustees for the securing of the said Estate according to the Will of the Donor, his chiefest care being to prevent any Claim his Nephew Mr. *John Lloyd* might make to it, for that his said Nephew was a frequenter of the Parish-Church all his life-time, &c. and did not partake of the benefits he might have made by Dissenting in that paticular. But so it is, the Testator has been dead about four years, and our good woman before-nam'd has enjoy'd the Estate, and has not in any thing slackn'd her hand wherein she might serve the Cause; for doing of which the more effectually, she converts the Hall of her Mansion-House to a very convenient *Meeting-place*, and furnish'd it with a *Pulpit*, and all necessary Pies and Seats for accommodating of the Auditory, which

which was very numerous; for the *Word* was preach'd as well in *Welsh* as in *English*; Mr. P— performing the first part; and of both Nations there was generally a great appearance.

It is to be considered in our remote parts, and especially in Villages, there is not Conveniencies for accomodating of People with necessary Provisions, when so far from their homes; to supply which, the good Woman (out of her own Purse) relieved all persons according to their Qualities, which you may reasonably guess cost Money; and 'tis now more then suspected that she has disbursed above 2000*l.* besides the yearly In-come; for that was very insignificant to the pressing occasions of the Congregation; and indeed (to give some of 'em their just Commendation) they were not wanting at any time to supply the good Gentlewoman with such sums of Money as she thought (for the better carrying on of the Work) she might stand in need of; and for security, they were so much her true Friends, that they never refus'd the meanest Servant in the House; by which kindness they the more easier effected their ends; as you shall presently understand.

The good Woman being intangled, as you have seen, and now hardly is Mistress of any thing she us'd to call her own, she laid it a little too near her heart, and was very much afflicted with melancholly, and by the care of her Trustees she was convey'd to *Shrewsbury*, for the better recovery of her health, and in the mean time the Estate is seiz'd by the said Preachers for the use of the Creditors; which was done so effectually, that all, or most of the poor Servants being engaged with their Mistress, fled, for fear of the storm coming upon themselves, and left the booty to any that would take it.

Mr. P— and Mr. ap R— having now preach'd themselves from the Hall to every individual Room in the House, and in full possession of the whole, it's observ'd that the usual care that was taken on the Congregation is somewhat abated, and the numbers begin to lessen, not only in the *Weekly-Meetings*, but in the *Great and Monthly-Meeting*, which was celebrated with *breaking of Bread in the evening, after a good Dinner at noon*; the defect of the latter does seem much to impair the use of the former; to prevent such an evil, will take up some Time and Cost.

And now, my good Country-man, as I have always heard a very good report of your Justice and Integrity, and your willingness to imploy your self upon all occasions wherein you might serve your Generation in any honourable undertaking, let me desire you to consider the sighs of the poor abus'd Widow, and find some expedient that she may be restor'd to her House and Estate; for in all probability that may be the only effectual way of a certain Cure; for so great a burden is too hard for one shoulder, (as appears by our Object;) but if laid upon the whole, it will not only cure a Distemper in her, but in many hundreds, who (it's fear'd) are infected, more or less, with the spoils of a *devour'd Widows House*; And if by your *spiritual Comforts* to the poor Woman you are successful, no doubt but it will be an acceptable piece of Service, and a much greater to God and the whole Kingdom; if your fatherly Admonitions against such Practices, there shall be no occasion for the future to make any Complaints of this kind. My service to the Brethren, but more especially to your self: I am a hearty well-wisher, and your Country-man.

Oswalltree in the County of
Salop, July 29. 1681.

J. M.

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